

Behavioral Case Study

ELED 3250

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There is a young man, in the second grade, who needs some help with behavior in the school setting. For our purposes, we will call him Howard¹. His family lives about twenty miles away from the school that he attends. He is able to attend the school because his grandparents live in the zoning of the school. Howard is dropped off at his grandparents' house no later than 6:30 every morning. He then goes there after school because his mother works and his father's health is poor, therefore he is unable to care for Howard and his older sister. Howard's sister attended the same school that he is attending now, and had no problems with behavior or fitting in. Howard's parents seem to have the same expectation for him. It is as if they expect him to be exactly like his sister, and when he is not they give him the attention he is craving, even though it is negative attention. Howard is not like his sister, at all, and should not be compared to her, but sadly in meeting his parents they do believe he needs to be the same. He rebels against them and he repeatedly acts out in the classroom creating a disturbance for the other children. On one occasion he was frustrated about not wanted to do his math worksheet on his own. As soon as his teacher told the class to get started, his hand was in the air. When she would not help him as quickly as she wanted, he shut down. His head was slammed on the table, at his own free will, and that is where he sat for around fifteen minutes. Once the teacher was able to give him her full attention he was able to get back to work and answer the questions correctly.

Howard's life in the classroom is not a happy one; there is not a day that goes by, that he is not being told to get back to work, or to pay attention. The same day as the incident with math, he was found under his desk after another student asked him stop touching their reading book. He had said that they were mean to him and he was running from their rudeness by hiding

¹ pseudonym

under his desk. All of these things happened during instruction time, and the teacher had given Howard a warning about three minutes prior to him being under his desk. Once the teacher got him out from under his desk, he was laughed at by the class, and then his head was once again slammed onto his desk. His teacher just let him stay there for the rest of instruction time and then during recess she talked to him. They then decided to change the seating so he was by people that accept him. Once he was moved, the rest of the day went smoothly and his new table mates accepted him well.

The playground is an entirely different story for Howard, he has a few friends that are in other second grade classes, and they play together very well. Sometimes Howard can be found playing basketball, and other times he is in the field just running and playing with his small group of friends. There was a time that I found him sitting on top of the dumpster. I asked him if he was supposed to be up there, and he replied, "Well, I can be up here, because the janitor is getting the key to get my ball out of the fenced in area." I said, "Do you think that is the right place to sit while you wait?" Howard replied with, "I don't have to listen to you because you are not related to me." My reply to this was, "When you are at school, the adults are in charge and make the rules. I know that you are not supposed to be on the dumpster, and unless you want to have your recess taken away for the rest of the week you need to get down." He did get down, but the phrase if looks could kill came into play here. His behavior toward authority is very disrespectful. It is as if, when he walks in the door of the school he has to be the center of attention and if he is not, then not one person around him will have a good day.

When asking Howard's teacher how she deals with his behavior, when I am not there for practicum, she told me that it is different than when I am there. On Tuesdays, he is usually well mannered and has very few outbursts, but when the teacher is the only adult in the classroom,

they butt heads multiple times. She deals with him with warnings, and then moving his clip to yellow or red, depending on where it is at the current time. It comes to a point in the day that his teacher has had enough and just ignores him altogether. When other students say that he has done something, the teacher takes the two or three of them aside and discusses what happened, and then she handles the situation with the normal warning, or moving of the clip. Most recently, the teacher had to take the behavior matter to the office, because Howard lied about finding \$40. At first, he said he found it on the sidewalk, on the way to school. About ten minutes later he said he found the money on the blacktop at school, and used twenty dollars to pay for lunch. He also told his teacher that he had gone to the eye doctor and gotten glasses the day before. When he was asked about the money and glasses again, he had a completely different story. Finally, his teacher had had enough and took him to the office to call his parents to find out the real story. Come to find out, he stole the money from his sister's Girl Scout cookie money and the glasses from a local grocery store. This incident made the teacher decide that it was time to have a parent conference, with the principal, and try to create a plan to help Howard's behavior at school and at home. Before this incident, there was no plan in place.

His teacher has also decided to discuss the situations with the school counselor, in hopes that she can help get him the counseling that could help him with his behavior. He does not have an individual education plan, nor have any services been provided to help his ongoing disruptive behavior. Many of the services have not been available to Howard because his behavior has not been recorded on his records; they have just been talked about in parent teacher conferences and in the classroom. This last incident has opened many doors for him to get some of the services that he needs to help him get in the right direction with his behavior.

The behavior that Howard has shown in the classroom and on the playground can be connected to many things, but there are a few that stand out. The fact that his parents seem to compare him with his sister could be a large part of his behavior problems. He may not know how to live up to their expectations so he has decided to just rebel against them fully. There is also the matter of if something is happening at home that is a little bit stressful or worrisome; Howard tends to act out more. One incident that supports this is, that one day he came into the classroom crying, at the beginning of school. When asked what was going on he turned away and hid his face. About ten minutes into the day, a woman that is a friend of the family stopped in to see how he was doing. We found out a little later that his mother had told the family, that morning, that she no longer loves them and never wanted to see them again. Howard was afraid that his mother was leaving and not coming back. This was not the case; she was just frustrated with the family and needed a break. It seems that Howard has outbursts of bad behavior because of negative situations that happen at home. Also, negative attention is better than no attention. His behavior could be because he is craving attention, and when he doesn't get the attention that he wants, he acts out to ensure that he will get some kind of attention. He also has a very difficult time releasing his frustrations; he takes them out on others or through slamming his head down, or against something.

The negative behaviors are not helping Howard's learning in any way. If nothing else the behaviors are hindering his and his classmates learning. The teacher is spending more time with disciplining him, than she is with instruction and this is taking away from everyone's learning. Howard's social standing is being affected very negatively because of his behaviors. He does have a few friends on the playground but most of the time he is alone and no one wants to be his partner because he is constantly disrupting their learning time. He seems to have pretty high

self-esteem, well he is pretty sure of himself, but mostly when he is lying about thing that he has done. Through his negative behaviors, of lying and speaking out, the class has come to think that he is a know it all and is arrogant. Only when the students don't believe him does his behavior show that his self-esteem is very low.

We could make helping Howard very complex, but the simpler the techniques are, the more it will help him behave better. It can't be expected that he will change overnight, but with a few small incentives there can be great advances in his good behaviors. To get him to pay attention in the classroom, giving him tickets for a day of good behavior, can boost his want to be good. After he gets five tickets, he can pick a prize from a box of prizes and then after he has gotten to pick out of the box four times, he will get a large prize. A basketball would be the best because he is very interested in owning his very own basketball. Once he can show that he can get the tickets and prizes, and then he will need to get more tickets to get the prizes. Increasing them by one every time he acquires 20 tickets will make him behave at longer intervals. As for his behavior with other students, he could get paired with a student that is willing to be his buddy for a week. During the week he can learn how to interact better with students and then, eventually, he will be able to interact with other students in a positive way. As for his not being able to release his frustrations, he needs to see the school counselor, and during one of his weekly visits she needs to evaluate him and decide how he can release his frustrations or recommend a counselor in the community that can help him learn how. His behaviors are ones that just need to modified through interventions and incentives, once techniques that work for Howard, are in place his negative behavior will decrease and the behaviors we need/want him to have will become prominent. It just takes a little time and patience. With the right techniques and people, behaviors can be changed for the good of all that come in contact with the student.